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INFO SHEET

Veterinary Services

United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

August 2000

Highlights: Changes in the U.S. Feedlot Industry, 1994-1999

In 1983, promoters of the concept that would become the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) envisioned a program that would monitor changes and trends in national animal health and management. They hoped to identify opportunities for improvement, provide up-to-date information for research and special studies, and detect emerging problems.

NAHMS reports from 1996 through 1999 describe changes in the swine, dairy cattle, and beef cattle industries over 5-year periods. The following information was excerpted from an additional report, the August 2000 *Changes in the U.S. Feedlot Industry, 1994-1999*.

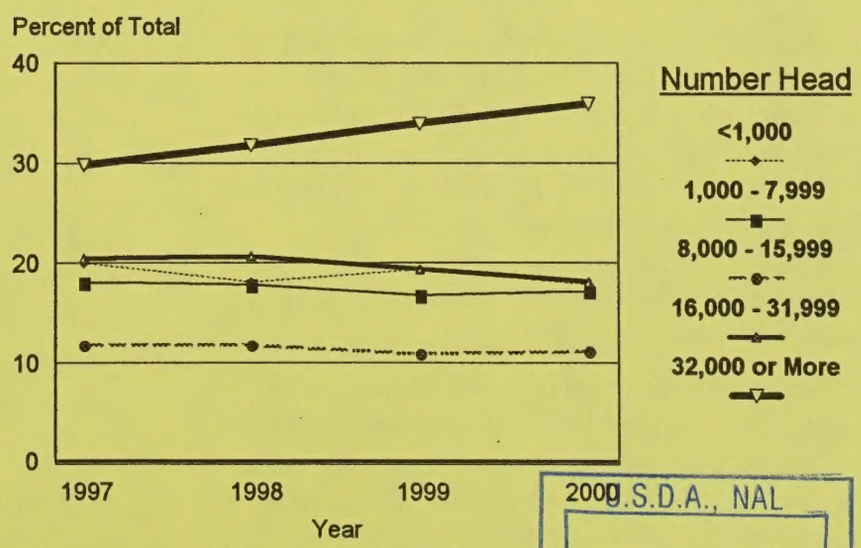
Demographic changes from a historical perspective are primarily from data provided by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Feedlot Industry Demographics

- The number of cattle on feed in the United States rose from 12,420,000 on January 1, 1995, to 13,983,000 in January 1, 2000.
- From 1997 to 2000, feedlots with 32,000 head or more capacity show a steady 2 percent increase per year in their contribution to the total number of cattle on feed and accounted for over one-third (35.9 percent) of all cattle on feed on January 1, 2000 (Figure 1).
- The number of cattle placed by month over the 4-year period, 1996-1999, consistently shows the largest number placed during October, the next largest in September, followed by August or November.
- The total federally inspected slaughter from 1995 to 2000 shows a decreasing contribution from steers and a higher contribution from heifers.
- Death loss as a percentage of cattle within the NAHMS Sentinel Feedlot program increased from 1.0 percent in 1994 to 1.4 percent in 1999. The proportion dying from respiratory deaths increased while the proportion dying from digestive deaths decreased.

Figure 1

Number of Cattle on Feed in the U.S. by Feedlot Capacity, January 1, 1997 - 1999



Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

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NAHMS Population Estimates

NAHMS' 1994/95 Cattle On Feed Evaluation (COFE), provided a snapshot of animal health and management that would serve as a baseline from which to measure industry changes in animal health and management. Completion of the NAHMS' Feedlot '99 study allows an assessment of change over time.

Phase I included data collected from 1,411 s in 13 major cattle on feed states[1] (Figure 2) via one from 913 producers with less than 1,000 head me feedlot capacity and via personal iew from 498 producers with 1,000 head re capacity from August 1 through mber 16, 1994. State and Federal inary Medical Officers conducted quent data collection on 453 operations 1,000 head or more capacity from October ough December 21, 1994. These states unted for 85.8 percent of the U.S. cattle on inventory as of January 1, 1994.

Feedlot '99 study focused on health and lth management data collection on those llots with 1,000 head or more capacity in 12 or cattle on feed states[2] (Figure 2). Data re collected on 520 feedlot operations via rsonal interview from August 16 through ptember 22, 1999. These states accounted r 95.8 percent of the cattle on feed in lots with 1,000 head or more capacity in the U.S. as of January 1, 1999.

Figure 2

States that Participated in the NAHMS 1994 COFE and Feedlot '99 Study

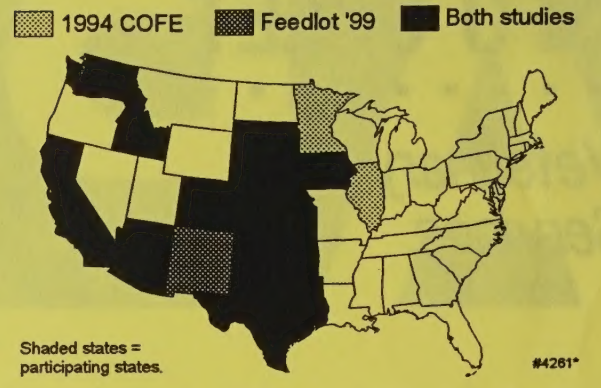
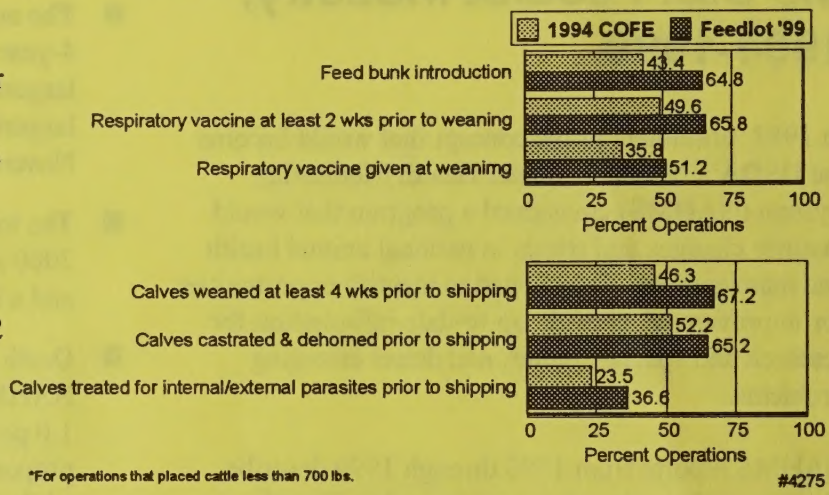


Figure 3

Percent of Operations* that Perceived Pre-arrival Management Practices on Cattle <700 lbs. to Be *Extremely* or *Very* Effective in Reducing Sickness and Death Loss, 1994 and 1999



- The percentage of cattle placed on feed that were owned by feedlots with an 8,000-head or greater capacity increased from 1994 to 1999 (20.5 percent compared to 34.0 percent of cattle placed).
- A higher percentage of operations reported that the pre-arrival procedures listed in Figure 3 were ***extremely or very*** effective in reducing sickness and death loss in cattle placed at less than 700 lbs in 1999 compared to 1994. Most of this increase may be from feedlots that responded ***does not apply/don't know*** in 1994 which may indicate that producers have become more knowledgeable about the effectiveness of pre-arrival processing.
- Whereas similar percentages of feedlots branded cattle after arrival in 1994 and 1999 (approximately 40 percent), a greater percentage of all cattle were branded in 1999 compared to 1994 (20.2 percent compared to 29.1, respectively).
- Almost identical percentages of feedlots (nearly two out of three) in 1994 and 1999 fed melengesterol acetate (MGA®), a heat suppressant, to at least some heifers.
- The percentage of feedlots that fed new arrivals a ration containing 1-35 percent energy concentrate (such as corn, wheat, or barley) decreased from 1994 to 1999. Over the same period, the percentage of feedlots that fed a ration containing 75 percent or more energy concentrate to new arrivals increased.
- There was a substantial increase in the percentage of dead cattle that had a postmortem examination from 1994 (45.9 percent) to 1999 (53.9 percent). This increase was primarily from postmortems by non-veterinarians.

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[1]Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington.

[2]Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington.

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